

# DWS and the 2012 Legislative Session

*Two important pieces of legislation signed into law*

Every New Year brings the State of Utah's legislative session, when part-time lawmakers from across the state converge on Utah's Capitol and wade through pressing public policy matters. This year, the session ran from January 23rd through March 8th—an intense and productive 45 days. During each session,

the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) closely monitors and testifies to bills that could potentially impact the agency. The 2012 session included two such important pieces of legislation (S.B. 129 and H.B. 139) which Governor Gary R. Herbert has signed into law.



## **SENATE BILL 129, "UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE MODIFICATIONS"**

Sponsored by Senator Curt Bramble, S.B. 129 is the result of a recommendation by leadership of DWS and the State Workforce Investment Board. S.B. 129 was passed unanimously in both the Senate and the House and lowered the top unemployment insurance tax rates by two percentage points and froze the minimum tax rate beginning in calendar year 2012. This legislation will save Utah small businesses over \$24 million which they can instead use to grow their operation and create jobs.

At the signing of S.B. 129, Governor Herbert noted that this tax cut is possible because Utah's unemployment trust fund is well-managed and Utah is the best in the nation at getting people back to work. "We understand the bedrock of our economic foundation is small business," Governor Herbert said. "Now we're giving them a little help by giving them a tax cut...Let the free market roll forward."



## **HOUSE BILL 139, "DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CULTURE AMENDMENTS"**

H.B. 139, sponsored by Representative Wayne Harper, restructured and renamed Utah's Department of Community and Culture (DCC) the Department of Heritage and Arts and moved the Housing and Community Development (HCD) Division from DCC to the Department of Workforce Services.

During legislative testimony, Representative Harper argued that over 70% of HCD's customers are also DWS customers and moving the Division of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) will save the taxpayers \$1.2 million annually. In addition, the move will remove HCD from an agency focused solely on art and heritage into DWS whose primary mission is to foster job creation and workforce development. The partnership will better align HCD's programs that support low-income households with DWS' training, job development and job connection resources. DWS sees substantial potential synergies by bringing the two organizations together and looks forward to building upon the shoulders of this new, important partnership within the agency and more effectively serving customers across Utah. 